

One hundred and ten years (110) ago on May 29, 1902, the Battle Mountain Sanitarium was signed into law. Today, the former sanitarium is part of the VA Black Hills Health Care System and a National Historic Landmark.

The move to establish a national sanitarium at Hot Springs, SD, began in the early 1890s. In September 1898, the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) passed a resolution at its National GAR encampment, held in Cincinnati that year, requesting that Congress establish a national sanitarium at Hot Springs. After several attempts, the bill was approved and signed by President Theodore Roosevelt on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1902. Citizens of Hot Springs donated the land, valued then as at least \$50,000, for "This Home [that was] the child of the Grand Army."



The Battle Mountain Sanitarium was the 10<sup>th</sup> and final facility built by the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS). Bath, the last National Home, was constructed in New York during the 1880s by the GAR. Battle Mountain was not intended for use as a soldier's home; instead, it was a short-term treatment facility for current residents of the NHDVS who suffered from lung or respiratory problems. Their transportation costs to sanitarium were paid for by the NHDVS.

According to NHDVS annual reports, "Preference was given to soldiers and sailors suffering from sub-acute and chronic rheumatism, neuritis, the early stages of interstitial nephritis, skin disease, and morbid conditions due to defective elimination. Cases of pulmonary tuberculosis where the general condition is such to justify a reasonable hope of recovery or improvement under favorable conditions shall be admitted to the Sanitarium. Applicants admitted for such time only as may be necessary to effect a cure or relief of the disabilities from which he is suffering. When a member has received all benefits that can reasonably be expected from the special treatment and various forms of hydro-therapeutics here available, he will be required to take his discharge from the Sanitarium or accept transfer to one of the Branch Homes. 336 beds could be increased to 416 whenever necessary."

Thomas R. Kimball of Omaha, Nebraska, was selected as the architect for the sanitarium. Ground broke for the facility on August 13, 1903 and the main group of buildings (Adm. Bldg., service bldg, bath house, chapel, library and laundry, and 6 ward buildings) was completed April 1, 1907. Bath house waters (medicinal hot water) were furnished from Mammoth Spring to all parts of the building. Two fine plunge baths were supplied with hot and cold water. A Tubercular Barrack for consumptives was constructed in the rear of the main Sanitarium group. "It will contain 40 beds and can be extended to 100 if necessary, making possible for 500 sick people at Battle Mtn. Sanitarium." The sanitarium was seen as potentially useful for the thousands of malaria-stricken soldiers from Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Philippines.

One of the few documented Civil War veterans known to be of Asian Pacific heritage, Edward Day Cohota, lived at the sanitarium.

During World War 1 hospital facilities were desperately needed for injured soldiers and the Battle Mountain Sanitarium was made available to the Public Health Service for a term of up to five years. In 1930, all 11 NHDVS facilities, including Battle Mountain Sanitarium, were transferred to the Veterans Administration. Today all of them continue to operate as Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities.

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